



CULTURAL SERVICES HIGHLY VALUED BY LOCAL COMMUNITY

An innovative study commissioned by Bolton Metropolitan Borough Council (BMBC) and MLA North West has shown that Bolton residents place real and significant value on their museums, libraries and archives services.

The study, carried out by economic experts Jura Consultants, questioned both users and non-users of the services. It demonstrated that Bolton's museums, libraries and archives were valued by the local community at £10.4 million. Put simply, for every £1 of public funding the services receive, they generate £1.60 of value for the Bolton economy. The study is the first of its kind, using the Contingent Valuation technique, to prove the value of the cultural sector to a local economy and the exciting results more than justify the investment made in these services.

BMBC runs 3 museums, 15 local libraries and a central archive distributed throughout the Borough, which can be accessed by members of the public free of charge. The study found that for many Bolton residents these cultural services play a critical role in their lives. One commented that her local library was the "lifeblood of the community" and another noted that the library is "the only place in the village which the whole community can use".

The services are very well used by local people, with an impressive 249,179 visits made to Bolton's museum, art gallery and aquarium and 9,293 visits to the archives in 2003/4. 1,487,666 visits were made to the libraries in 2004/5.

The project is planned to be the first of a number of similar studies in the North West and nationally, underpinning the contribution that museums, libraries and archives make to society. A toolkit is now available to enable other local authorities to carry out similar evaluations.

ENDS

Notes to Editors:

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For a copy of the full report go to www.mlanorthwest.org.uk/mlanorthwest/publications

About MLA North West

- MLA North West is committed to developing accessible, inclusive collections and services that provide lifelong learning, inspiration and enjoyment for all.
- MLA North West provides innovative services and strategic leadership for over 200 museums, 40 major archives and 500 libraries.
- MLA North West's aim is to maximise the contribution this sector makes to the North West's cultural, educational and economic prosperity.
- MLA North West is one of nine regional agencies in the UK tasked with the promotion and development of the sector nationwide.